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REVIEW

Laura Hengehold, *The Body Problematic: Political Imagination in Kant and Foucault* (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), ISBN: 978-0-271-03211-5

In *The Body Problematic*, Laura Hengehold develops an ingenious and comprehensive account of the relation between body and State in Kant and Foucault. However, the book also comprises an analysis of how this relation mattered in their theoretical development. This is done from their respective conceptualizations of the body and their idea of a possible theory of the body.

The book follows a three-part strategy that is presented in Hengehold's thought-provoking introduction: She initially reconstructs Kant's conceptualization of the political economy of the body, before doing the same for Foucault, based on his reception of the aforementioned Kantian conceptualization. Finally, she discusses the conceptual tools derived in her reconstruction, which are then used for the purpose of a critique political modernity. This latter part takes the form of a *negative anthropology*.

The present reviewer's overall impression of the work is favorable. Having worked on a manuscript with a similar topic in recent years, I find that Hengehold has written a book, which—in substance—is similar to the one I was busy with. Alas, she has also done a much better job than I could have. By laying out the issue, the author has set the bar very high, and thereby done those working in the field a huge favor. We now have a new benchmark that both inspires us and vindicates our work.

We must begin the review by exploring the introduction and outlining exactly what makes it so thought provoking.

Laura Hengehold starts her book with the story of an elderly, but somewhat obese lady who was killed by the police in 1984. This happened in an effort to resist her pending eviction from city housing. The story combines perspectives of the body, mental illness, (in)justice, and democracy to capture the book's topic: *political imagination*, how it came to be; how it developed to its current state; and finally why the body matters:

> *Although her death had simple causes, Mrs. Bumpurs would not have died if not for the way a broad range of personal and institutional expectations construed her body and freedom*. (1)

Hengehold approaches this story by analyzing the different relations evoked in the situation that led to the woman's death—relations that are precipitated by and build on the imaginations of the different actors involved. These count individuals as well as institutional actors.

Everybody involved in this situation imagined *something*, and, most certainly, something *else*: agency workers imagined 'an urgency of the situation'; the policemen imagined 'a threatening person'; Mrs. Bumpurs imagined 'strangers invading her home.' (2/3) However, there are connections that led these actors together and towards this particular outcome. The *imagination,* which Hengehold is interested in, has both a *physical* dimension, in the material body of Mrs. Bumpurs, and a *political* dimension, insofar as it involves power relations and since the actor's (and their imaginations) *in play* are engaged in resolving situations where power relations or bodies emerge as problematic by either working towards changing the power relations or by keeping them *in place*.

Hengehold illustrates the salience of the problem in a further case. In these examples, she invokes a figure that is most interesting and which she calls *the mad critic*—a figure of critique who is "not necessarily insane, but lacking the resources and the ability to communicate with a public that could have made the conflict in her imagination *real* and therefore capable of being altered" (3/4) since they are "unable to convince anyone that their acts and words correspond to reality" as they are rendered "incapable of making meaningful history." (5)

Yet, she points out that the figure of the mad critic is an uneasy point for the demarcation of reality and political phenomena that *feel* unreal, because they have the potential to make explicit that the "discourses and practices that have authority over our bodies are far less unified than we fear or would like to believe." (5)

Thus, even if she does not explore the potential of the *mad critic* further after the introduction, her business is *critique*. She instead reconstructs a concept of *critique* in Kant and Foucault. This is done in a zone of convergence between philosophical anthropology and political anthropology.

Her chapter on Kant begins with an acceptance of two points that are less-than self-evident among Kant-scholars and Foucault commentators: She not only acknowledges that Kant was one of the continuous threads throughout Foucault's career, but that it was particularly Kant's anthropological project which was the continual source of this fascination. Indeed, the subject of Foucault's thesis was a commentary of Kant's lecture course on anthropology. Secondly and with Foucault, she accepts that even in Kant's continuous conceptual development, his interest in anthropology and critique as an *anthropological* method can be viewed as a unifying aspect in the powers of the mind. To achieve this perspective, she utilizes Foucault's device of the *heterotopia,* showing that Kant's problematization of the body as an object of experience and imagination "moves heterotopically," even if, by the time Kant was fully engulfed in his Post-Copernican critical phase, the body appeared as 'Missing in action.' It was not simply gone, but had become a Zizekian 'vanishing mediator.' Hengehold's account flies in the face of many writers who still make the claim that there is no place for the body in Kant or that Kantian philosophy is directed against the body. Hengehold does so with a vengeance based on an excellent knowledge of Kant's oeuvre that transcends the main focus on the first two Critiques, Groundworks and Metaphysics of Morals (and the widespread exclusion of the last chapters of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), following the late-19th cen-

tury legacy of the division into the Southwestern and the Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism who, in fighting over a post-Kantian and Post-Lotzean meaning of the concept of value, each sought to reduce Kantianism to either a school of ethics or a logic of natural science, and creating a collective amnesia over what Timothy Lenoir dubbed Kant's *vital materialism*, his connection of philosophy to medicine, biology, and anthropology via the problem of the body. In line with a recent re-*vitalization* of materialism in feminist theory and a small but growing branch of scholars who try to re-read Kant in his actual science historical context, Hengehold allows that these reconstructive efforts owe a lot to the work of Foucault (and Deleuze) and she manages to uncover the political dimension of the body and the bodily dimension of any political philosophy in Kant. Accordingly, she equips Kantian thinking with a certain *playfulness* that will surprise many scholars who were brought up on the standard textbook accounts. Unlike other recent efforts that try to evaluate the meaning of Kant for Foucault or for any Foucauldian theory of modernity,[1] Hengehold manages to address that a Foucauldian perspective needs to understand the dialectical relationship between language and space. This does not privilege one over the other. The fact that Foucault views language as related to practice and not reducible to mere textual practices and, respectively, that the topology of the body is a problem that emerges because heterotopic movements exist precisely because this problematic is at the same time discursive *and* material. Hengehold convincingly shows that we can arrive at such a Foucauldian perspective from reading Kant, because "Kant, unlike philosophers of mathematics was interested in explaining the social impact and causes of our 'representations of space' along with the topological impact and causes." (113, Hengehold in reference to Graham Nerlich)

Respectively, Hengehold reconstructs Foucault's *critical project* not on the basis of a static discussion of concepts, such as the historic *apriori* (e.g. Beatrice Han), but as a dynamic process that utilizes the power of *heterotopia* as a tool that is simultaneously analytical *and* political. This does not mean that she must abandon traditional 'Husserl-Heideggerian' notions that have captivated most international reception of Foucault. However, she manages to go beyond them by taking Foucault's lifelong interest in Kant seriously. Within the *critical project* of Foucault, she connects his idea of a dialectical relation between language and space with the Kantian insight into the relation between discursivity and materiality. The result is that the human mind is the mediator and the center in a political struggle of language and embodiment, in which the human body emerges as the sources for all sorts of heterotopological developments. One of my main criticisms here is that Hengehold does not take the final step by stating what I have long thought to an obvious conclusion: that the body itself is a heterotopia and, therefore, that it is also a *multiplicty* (Deleuze), making the two concepts—like Deleuze and Foucault themselves—two sides of the same coin. In other words, my criticism is that Hengehold might have included a more profound discussion of Deleuze (and Guattari), because Deleuze's political critique is evidently tied to his adoption of Kantian philosophy in the wake of Leibniz and Spinoza, as well as his interlocutive exchanges with Foucault, and vice versa. She points to this herself at the end of Part Two on Foucault, in criticizing that A

[1] For the purpose of this review I [ab]use the 'theory of modernity' as a signifier for a wide range of modes of political critique.

Foucauldian critique of power relations will only achieve a critique without creative potentials for agency and conceptualization, which is exactly the alternative option that Deleuze offered and which Foucault asserted as the "Deleuzean century."

Hengehold argues that with Kant and Foucault we arrive at a negative anthropology, and I agree that she has outlined and argued this point convincingly for us to accept that this is the kind of anthropology we need for a new *critical theory* in both philosophy and political economy in the age of post-democracy (Colin Crouch).

At the end of the day, such a 'negative anthropology,' she claims, cannot and should not be able to "anticipate what kind of bodies and psychology we will have in the kingdom of ends," nor can or should any "movement or state […] know *a priori* whose being will *fail to benefit* from a changed society." This anthropology has the task of keeping the potentials alive and unhinged to imagine and criticize, both in the present and in the future, the forms of embodiment of rights and publics.

In this Kant-Foucault(-Deleuze) scholarship, Hengehold's book embodies a new benchmark that nobody can disregard. Despite this or that detail any reader (myself above all) may disagree with, despite the occasional potential she fails to reel in, *The Body Problematic* is an important moment in the three discourses it touches upon: Kantian scholarship, Foucault commentary and contemporary political anthropology. Moreover, it holds the promise of the vision and outline towards a new *critical theory* that can reinvigorate the Kantian and Foucauldian tools of the trade, while accepting the new challenges of post-democracy and, I would dare to venture, post-colonialism.

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